

SMALLER MEMBERSHIP CHURCHES
DIVISION REPORT
Dot Descieux, Chair
July 29, 2017

The Smaller Membership Churches Committee continues to seek ways to be helpful to churches in the Presbytery. At a recent meeting, members worked in two groups and examined their own congregations in regard to strengths and weaknesses, and relationships with other churches near them, considering how congregations can work with others in the community to be more loving and effective in ministry. They looked at concerns, needs, and issues by age groups and abilities, considering kids, middle-aged adults, and older adults. One group had almost no children, and focused on people with disabilities, talking about such things as personal contact for shut-ins, lending assistance by building ramps, and performing even seemingly simple acts like changing light bulbs for those who cannot manage these tasks by themselves. Maintaining contact with phone calls, cards and visits can also lend better quality of life to the homebound.

Congregations who have small groups of children discussed working with other near-by churches to provide better youth activities and Vacation Bible Schools or Camps in the summer.

Many smaller congregations will remember the series of Forums two years ago led by Paul Grier and Olanda Carr from the Presbyterian Foundation, in which they guided churches in examining themselves more critically and realistically in many practical ways. They looked at financial situations and issues of sometimes long-deferred maintenance, and resulting effects on their futures. Paul and Olanda have offered to present an Update Forum this summer, intended for all congregations, large or small. The date is Tuesday, August 22, at First Presbyterian Church in Morganton. Information will be shared on the most recent trends in American Protestantism, especially those affecting smaller congregations. They will discuss what this means to us and how congregations are responding to build and maintain vibrancy in their own faith communities. More detailed information will be forthcoming. (Small Church Attachment 1)

During the time of the previous Forums, Lucy Keil also worked with a number of churches to help them get a better handle on financial issues and how to deal with some of their day to day problems. Small Church approached her about doing some follow-up work as well. In response, she graciously agreed to meet with Church Clerks and Treasurers, and has done one such event as part of a recent Sessional Records Training meeting. A second presentation will be at the final Training, at Bessemer City Presbyterian Church on September 30. Her address will be for churches of all sizes, but she will also speak to some unique concerns of the very small churches.

Water-to-Wine grants are available for those who have a vision for a ministry in their own community. Applications are on the Presbytery website.

AFRICAN AMERICAN ADVISORY TEAM REPORT

The African American Church Forum, “Standing at the Crossroads #4,” was held April 1, 2017, at Third Street Presbyterian Church in Gastonia. The program was entitled “Is Small the New Big?” Twenty three people attended from five African American Churches in the Presbytery. Topics included were: a) Accept reality and build on strengths; b) A compelling story about your history, purpose, and mission; c) Intentional efforts to increase visibility; and d) Customized methods for outreach. The program was presented by the Rev. Eddie Deas from Third Street and Ryburn Presbyterian Churches, the Rev. Hal Bennett from Dulatown Presbyterian Church, Olanda Carr with the Presbyterian Foundation, and Dot Descieux from the Smaller Membership Churches Committee.

Planning is underway for a fifth Forum to be held in August and details will be sent out soon.

Small Church Attachment 1

Update forum

PRESENTED BY

THE PRESBYTERIAN FOUNDATION

TWO BREAKOUT SESSIONS:

*GENEROSITY & STEWARDSHIP
STRATEGIES & TECHNIQUES

*KNOWING YOUR NEIGHBOR: TO WHOM
& HOW DO YOU REACH OUT?

AUGUST 22, 2017

10:30 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
100 SILVER CREEK ROAD, MORGANTON NC

A light lunch will be served. Please RSVP by 8/15 to
(828)438-4217 or email twilliams@presbyterywnc.org.